

Prohibiting short-handled farming tools
(SB 545 by Uribe/Guerrero)

DIGEST: SB 545 would have prohibited employers from requiring agricultural workers to use, in a stooped position, a knife or other tool that has a handle shorter than four feet while doing agricultural work other than harvesting or transplanting, that is commonly done with a hoe for cleaning, weeding, thinning or cultivating.

GOVERNOR'S
REASONS
FOR VETO:

The governor said the bill was unnecessary because the availability of workers compensation to farm workers gives agricultural employers adequate incentive to create safer working conditions. Workers' compensation tax rates are tied to the number of work-related injuries for which an employer's workers receive worker-compensation benefits.

AUTHOR'S
VIEW:

"What Bill Clements seems to be saying is that it is all right to be injured," said Sen. Hector Uribe. The purpose of the bill was to eliminate stoop labor, which has been proven to cause chronic back injuries. Agricultural employers would not have the incentive to stop forcing their workers to do stoop labor until after injuries have occurred. Moreover, by forcing tax rates to go up before this cruel treatment can be eliminated, Clements is "exacerbating the problem" of increasing workers' compensation premiums for employers, said Sen. Uribe.

NOTES: The House Research Organization analysis of SB 545 appeared in the April 25, 1987 Daily Floor Report.